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STATE OF MAINE

ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTIETH LEGISLATURE

HEALTH CARE SYSTEM AND HEALTH SECURITY BOARD

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**MAINE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM AND HEALTH SECURITY BOARD
RECEIVES GRANT FOR \$200,000**

(AUGUSTA, ME, July 18, 2002) The Maine Health Care System and Health Security Board, a bipartisan task force established by the Legislature, has received a grant of \$200,000 from the Maine Health Access Foundation, Inc. to assess the feasibility and cost of implementing a universal coverage, single payer system in Maine. Such a system would provide health care coverage to every Maine resident. The grant funds will be used to contract with an expert firm for econometric modeling of the costs and economic impact of such a health care system in Maine.

The Health Security Board had previously obtained \$43,500 from public and private sources to support the project. However, the funding from the Maine Health Access Foundation will enable the project to be fully realized. As Senator John Martin (D- Eagle Lake), Co-Chair of the Health Security Board noted, " We are so pleased that the Foundation has chosen to support this project. With these funds, we will be able to commission a complete and thorough assessment of the economic and financial impact of a single-payer plan on individuals and businesses in Maine." Representative Paul Volenik (D – Brooklin), who also serves as Co-Chair, added, "This study will move the dialogue forward over how to achieve universal access for Maine citizens. An in-depth

and objective analysis of the costs of a single-payer health care system will help Maine people and policymakers make decisions about health care reform.”

The study is being pursued under Public Law 2001, Chapter 439, Part ZZZ, which authorized the formation of a bipartisan task force to develop recommendations relating to a state single payer system, and to issue a report to the Legislature by the end of 2002. The Health Security Board has 19 members including representatives of both branches and both parties within the Legislature, the Department of Human Services, the State Employee Health Commission, the State Tax Assessor and representatives of major stakeholder organizations.

Proposals to conduct the study have been submitted by five prominent national health care consulting firms specializing in economic modeling. The Health Security Board anticipates selecting a vendor on or about July 22, 2002, with a study completion date of November 15, 2002.

The Maine Health Access Foundation, Inc. (MeHAF) is the state’s largest private nonprofit health care foundation. The Foundation was created as the result of the sale of the non-profit Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Maine to Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield (a for-profit health care insurer). The proceeds of the acquisition provided the endowment that supports the Foundation’s annual grant and program activities. MeHAF’s mission is to promote affordable and timely access to comprehensive, quality health care for every Maine resident. To advance this mission, MeHAF supports strategic solutions to Maine’s health care needs through grants and other programs, particularly targeting those who are uninsured and medically underserved. The Foundation currently has assets of \$88,000,000.

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